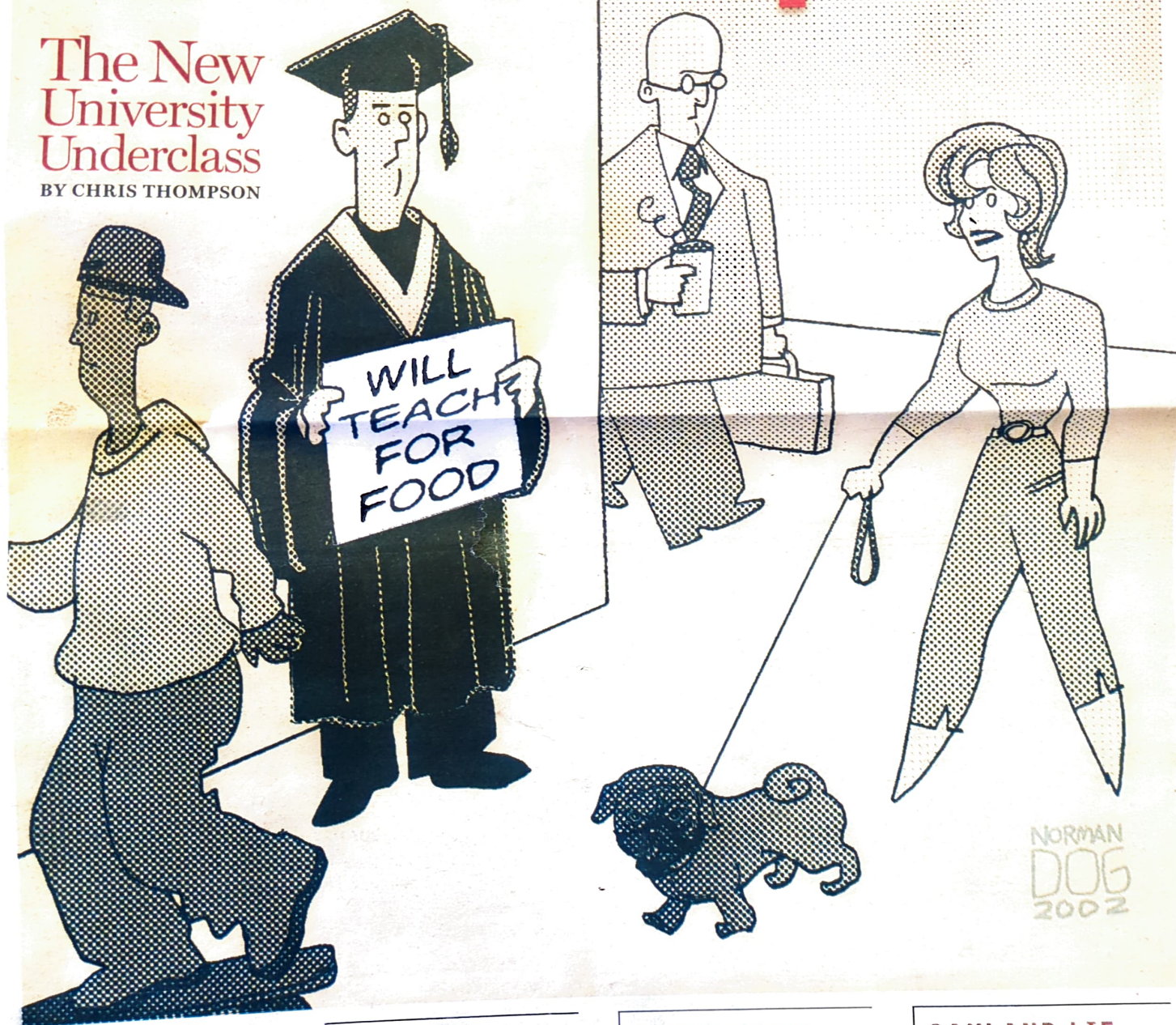


EAST BAY **express**

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The New University Underclass

BY CHRIS THOMPSON



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DOG
2002

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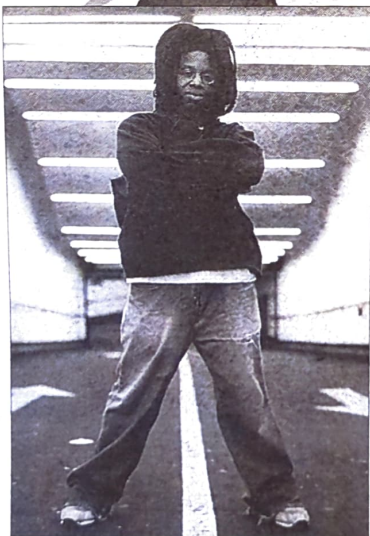
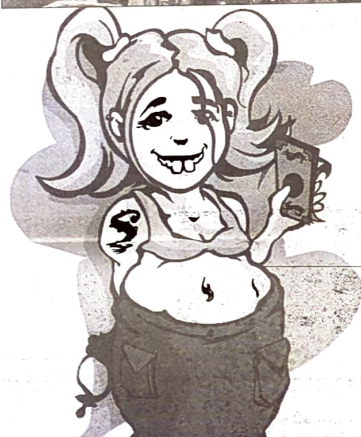
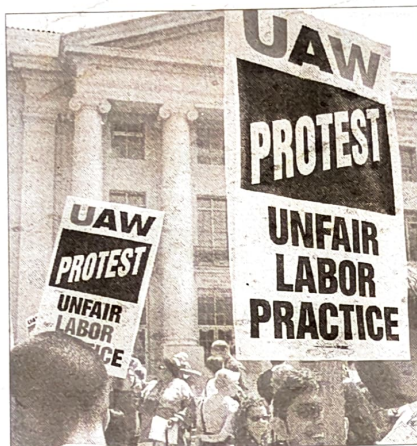
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After eleven years of higher education, and with \$32,000 in debt, Julian Bourg had \$350 a month for food and bills.

THE NEW UNIVERSITY UNDERCLASS

As a three-day walkout threatens to shut down UC Berkeley, the nation is awakening to a brand-new crisis in higher education: the plight of the temporary professor.

BY CHRIS THOMPSON

WELCOME TO the University of California at Berkeley — now go stand in line. It's the first week of class for more than 30,000 students, an administrative challenge under any circumstances. But this year, the campus' 2,300 clerical workers walked off the job for the first three days of class to protest what they consider bad-faith bargaining on the part of UC negotiators. It's the first staff walkout in thirty years. Amid the chaos, few may have noticed that a second group of university employees also walked off the job: the men and women who teach at least 37 percent of undergraduate courses throughout the UC system — the most vulnerable and marginalized class in modern academia. Men and women like Julian Bourg.

As a Cal graduate student, life was reasonably good for Bourg. He made a modest living teaching classes and studying French politics in the aftermath of the 1968 uprising, living on ramen and the writings of Guy Debord in a studio apartment in the Berkeley Hills. He always knew the system depended upon roughly 4,386 graduate student instructors to keep the business of educating 23,269 undergrads afloat. It was part of the deal: Leading discussion groups and grading term papers was a component of his continuing education, and the paltry

wages and temporary contract went along with his career track.

Then Bourg got his Ph.D. After he filed his dissertation and started hustling for faculty positions around the country, he took a position as a lecturer in his old department to pay the bills, teaching European intellectual history. He became one of the 612 members of UC Berkeley's "non-senate faculty," an army of lecturers and adjunct professors without whom the entire educational system would collapse — Ph.D.s who often earn next to nothing and inhabit a twilight world of neglect and disrepute in the halls of academia. Bourg instantly felt the effects of his new status when he realized he was earning less per course as a fully vested Ph.D. than he had as a mere grad student.

During the 2001-02 academic year, Bourg taught two classes per semester. Although technically he was working two-thirds time, he claims he often put in ten-hour days assembling the syllabi, preparing lectures, and leading discussion groups that burned through a book a week. For this, while teaching at one of the nation's most prestigious academies, he earned no more than \$1,500 a month, \$850 of which was eaten up in rent. Then his student loan repayment schedule kicked in, and Bourg was mailing \$300 checks each month until he managed to reschedule the payments. After eleven years of higher education, and with \$32,000 in debt, Bourg had \$350 a month for food and bills.

"As a grad student, you're accustomed to a basic, nonextravagant lifestyle, so I'm used to that," he says. "The difference is for a grad student, you set your own schedule and you're not regularly accountable to anyone. The ratio is time and money; as a grad student, you don't mind not having a lot of money, because you have a lot of time. The crunch isn't eating mac and cheese. It's working ten-hour days and coming home to eat mac and cheese."

And Bourg soon realized the other downside to being a lecturer: the potential end of his ability to rise in academia. Stick around as a Cal lecturer for more than a few years and your career stalls out forever. When faculty search committees look for new professors, research and original thinking generally is prized more highly than one's ability to teach. Lecturing takes so much time, and so few colleges help their adjunct faculty pursue their field of study, that after a few semesters of working the undergrad circuit, lecturers cannot keep up with their competitors and are simply not seen as tenure material.

"If I found myself as a lecturer for a second or third year, I'd probably change professions," Bourg says. "I know I'd never enter into that cycle, because for those who do, it's a point of no return. In the humanities, so much of position is about perception. It's important where you got your degree, it's important that you publish, or your dissertation resonates with current trends. Anything

that undermines the perception that you're not the best of the best undermines your chances to get on a tenure track. For example, if you're about to get your Ph.D., your status goes up, because you're pure potential. But the longer you go after you file your dissertation, questions are raised about why you haven't gotten a tenure-track position yet. Time is not on your side, and people who lecture for two years or more get caught in a permanent subclass."

Bourg ultimately secured a postdoctoral fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis, breaking him out of the lecturer cycle. But as he prepared to move east, one last indignity awaited. As Bourg assembled the material for his final classes this summer, he learned that faculty who hail from outside the UC system were paid \$1,000 more to teach the same course. He threw up his hands in disgust, and admits that he was less than enthusiastic when he returned to class. "I tried to adapt my teaching to the new pay rate," he says. "I wouldn't say I slacked off, but I did not go the extra mile. When the day was over, I didn't go home and put in the work I would have if I felt I was being invested in."

But that's in the past for Julian Bourg. At Washington University, he'll pull down \$12,000 more a year for carrying a teaching load only half as heavy as the one he shouldered at Cal. As he packed up his belongings last week and threw out all his milk-carton furniture, Bourg warned about the long-term **continued on page 19**

public higher education is at a crossroads.

"If current trends continue, more than one-third of the Californians seeking to enroll in one or another of the state's public post-secondary education systems may be unable to do so by the year 2015," the Rand report stated. "This confluence of circumstances has created a time bomb ticking under California's social and economic foundations. The college degree has replaced the high-school diploma as the entry card into productive employment. If this degree is becoming increasingly out of reach for large segments of the population, then a revolution in education is essential to deter potential social unrest."

So the forty-year promise of universal access to higher education has created its own academic inequity — one that, Schuster worries, could ultimately erode the state's academic prestige for future generations. At Cal State Hayward, where over the last six years the number of lecturers has exceeded the number of tenured faculty, this is simply the result of the hard choices necessary to guarantee its inexpensive education package. At UC Berkeley, whose lecturers actually have less job security and benefits than in the Cal State system, the problem is more sinister. Cal administrators don't just promise an affordable education — they promise the best education you can get. But a combination of fiscal dynamics and a deeply entrenched bias against teaching in favor of research has created a pervasive caste system among the faculty. This is the stark new reality for 23,000 unwitting undergraduates.

Ironically, many of those students who are aware of the phenomenon have come to hold lecturers in high regard. "You might say the lecturers were better than professors, 'cause that's why they were hired," says Raymond Liu, who graduated in May. "A lot of the professors, they get trotted out to teach a class every five years, but all they want to do is research. I often thought that I got a better education at my community college, because the faculty was there to teach."

But many other students are either unaware of what lecturers do ("Lecturers have more education than professors, right?" says incoming freshman Andrew Farmer) or do not stay at Cal long enough to notice the turnover of experienced educators. "I didn't know there were lecturers," says incoming freshman Hilary Lawson. "I knew that a lot of the classes were taught by graduate students, but I always thought the professors came to the lectures, did their thing, and that's what it's all about."

ACCORDING TO some lecturers, this phenomenon even extends to the graduate programs and professional schools. Nancy Lemon is among the nation's most prominent authorities on domestic-violence law; she authored a textbook that is used in law schools around the country, teaches seminars for judges and legal clinics, and works as an expert witness in domestic-violence cases. But she claims that in her fourteen years as a lecturer at Boalt, she's encountered nothing but disrespect and marginalization. Lemon has applied for tenure-track positions at Boalt twice, only to be rebuffed without a second thought. "The first time, I was told that I shouldn't be it personally, because none of the lecturers were even considered," she says. "The second time, I didn't even receive a letter; I had to get in

ask the dean why I hadn't received any response. Friends of mine in the tenure track told me that it was a waste of time. Lecturers will never be considered."

Some years, Lemon claims, she didn't even get an office to share, and was forced to conduct office hours with her students in the cafeteria. But her greatest complaint is her impression that Boalt works to exclude lecturers from the intellectual life of the campus. "The collegiality of faculty, in which people share ideas, write books together, think together — lecturers are no part of that," she says. "We're not invited to faculty meetings. We don't have offices, so we never come into contact with colleagues and share ideas." Lemon got so fed up with her working conditions and pay scale that she tried to quit last year, and only agreed to stay after hundreds of law students and

alumni mounted a successful petition drive to get her a raise.

"By the time you get to a point where over half the classes are taught by lecturers, you have to revamp the entire system," she says. "It was never meant to be this way. It's like you're running a hospital, and half the nurses are coming from some state registry, and you don't know them and will never see them again. It's a McDonald's approach to education — it's better to have entry-level, minimum-wage people that will rotate out. But I don't think that serves the state of California."

Bob Infelise, one of Lemon's lecturing colleagues at Boalt, disagrees with this assessment. He practices environmental law in San Francisco and teaches on the side, and says lecturers at Boalt were always expected to be working lawyers. Infelise says he has been treated with the greatest

respect at Boalt. Even if lecturers don't get all the perks of tenured faculty, they know the score when they get in the game. They're lawyers, after all — they're supposed to spend most of their time in court.

"The whole notion of being treated as a second-class citizen is baffling to me," he says. "One thing you have to keep in mind is lecturers all have other jobs. We're hired to bring our expertise to the law school in those areas that the school needs. As far as the pay goes, the reason why we're paid a lot less is because we do a lot less. Tenured faculty do both teaching and scholarship. We don't have any responsibilities for scholarship. We only do the fun part, which is being in a class with a lot of students. No one should take an adjunct job in the law school thinking that that would be the way to feed their families. No one promised them that." continued on page 22

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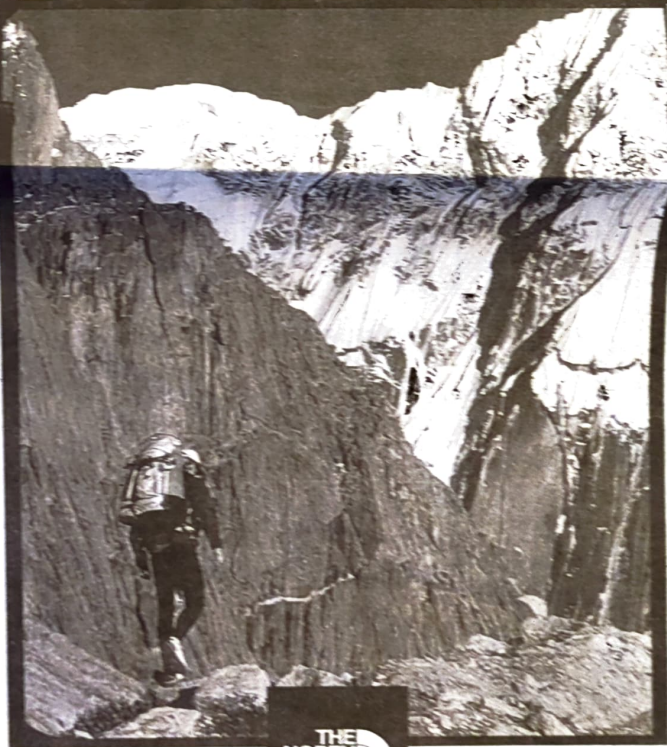
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Timothy Johnson hanging up to ABC, Chardonnay Valley, Washington Mountains. Photo: © 2002 Jimmy Chu



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University Underclass

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Infelise is hardly alone. Many lecturers claim that there are distinct advantages to adjunct positions, mainly for those who aren't interested in tenure-track or full-time academic careers. The flexible schedules are perfect for those whose partners are the primary breadwinner, and many simply view lecturing as a pleasant, intellectually fulfilling sideline gig — a break from their main careers. Some even teach out of loyalty to their alma mater. Steve Etter, a cofounder of the investment management firm Greyrock Capital Group, has lectured at the Haas School of Business for eight years. "I donate my time to teach, as I believe higher education is the solution to many of our social and economic problems today," he writes. "A few faculty and administrators had a significant impact on my life while at Cal, which is what motivates me to donate my time. I am the first in my family to attend college."

The presence of specialty lecturers explains part of the university's policy on short-term contracts. It's known as the "flexibility argument." Education trends and fields of study are changing more quickly than ever, and administrators need the capacity to find faculty specializing in the dynamics of, say, online retailing or Islamic thought to keep up with current events. "Traditionally, one thought of lecturers as people with very special skills that were filling in for non-research positions," says Ira Michael Heyman, who served as UC Berkeley's chancellor in the '80s. "Especially in languages, letters, and science, and professional schools teaching advanced courses where you needed special knowledge. Maybe an esoteric tax course that required specialized knowledge, or you were teaching things for the benefit of advanced students. That's how I had always thought about lecturers. I didn't think of them as a substitute for ladder-rank faculty."

Current UC officials have gone into strike mode and won't speak about the lecturer

phenomenon in any detail, but Paul Schwartz, the spokesman for president Richard Atkinson's office, says this flexibility lies at the heart of the lecturer's raison d'être. "The function is to help UC fulfill its teaching mandate and to ensure a sufficient influx of new ideas and expose students to a variety of perspectives and expertise," he says. "The focus is on teaching, on providing sufficient security of employment, while at the same time preserving the university's right to appropriately manage the mix of expertise within this faculty group." Schwartz declined to elaborate on whether the system needs a corresponding ability to shed itself of scholars of outdated subjects.

But the flexibility argument finds little enthusiasm among the hundreds of lecturers across the state who teach not esoterica, but survey courses for lower-division undergraduates. Dorothy Gilbert has been a lecturer at Cal State Hayward for the last ten years, teaching lower-division writing composition and mythology courses in the English department. At the same time, her translation of the French

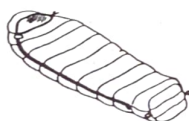
Arthurian romance *Erec et Enide* won a national award from the Columbia Translation Center in 1992. Up until September 11, she was working nearly full-time, for which she earned a little more than \$36,000 a year. But it's not so much the pay that irritates her — it's the hundreds of little ways the university expresses its contempt for lecturers. The university won't even spring for voicemail for her students to contact her. "I think my students should be able to get hold of me, but the university won't even take messages on their behalf. I let them have my e-mail address, but it's on my nickel. I think my phone bill was \$200 last year on university business. The university is getting a great deal with me."

Gilbert is just one of 449 lecturers at Cal State Hayward, a figure that easily exceeds the 355 members of its tenure-track faculty. Such instructors have become known as the "roads scholars" because in order to earn a living wage, they must drive from campus to campus piecing together a lecture course here, a

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discussion group there. In one day, a lecturer may commute to Cal State Hayward, Lancy College, and Diablo Valley College, racing to assemble lecture notes and get to class on time. According to Cal State Hayward spokesperson Kim Huggett, this has strained relations between lecturers, faculty, and the administration, particularly in a year when the campus have been forced into budget cutbacks. "Yes, it's been an issue on this campus that we've been trying to deal with," he concedes. "Individual campuses have some leeway on their own budgets, but this budget year has not been a good one. It's forced the campus to make decisions on the faculty and deferred maintenance."

Yet in many ways, lecturers in the Cal State system are better compensated than at the state's flagship institution. Under the Cal State contract signed this spring, lecturers now receive benefits for working forty percent of full-time, enjoy the option to pick up new courses as they become available, and got a four percent raise this year. UC negotiators have been considerably less accommodating. Last spring, administrators at UC Davis fired a group of lecturers just as they were on the cusp of getting the three-year contracts that come with their sixth year of employment. Administration spokespersons say they plan to return tenured faculty to the classroom, but campus lecturers say this signaled a new systemwide policy to weed out the senior lecturers and replace them with rookies who would start at the bottom of the salary scale. Campus administrators even fired Victor Squitieri, who won the UC Davis Academic Federation's excellence in teaching award two years earlier. Outraged lecturers launched a two-day strike in May, shutting down more than a hundred classes across the campus.

Now that same crisis is coming to UC Berkeley, as a remarkable 88 percent of lecturers, who have been without a contract for two years, voted to authorize a strike. Their demands include a salary increase and job security beyond the one-year contracts, but UC officials claim the strike is illegal, since negotiations are still ongoing. Kevin Roddy, the president-elect of the University Council of the American Federation of Teachers, say that's part of the problem. "UC negotiators get paid while they're temporizing, but we get nothing," he says. "That's one of their tactics; wearing us down over time. There doesn't seem to be a serious effort to bargain with us. But we're serious. This isn't a casual operation for us."

But this is far more than a labor issue. Some lecturers claim the administration's posture reflects contempt not just for lecturers, but for the very practice of teaching itself. Take for example the remarks of Horace Mitchell, UC Berkeley's Vice Chancellor of Business and Administrative Services, who says the rising number of lecturers is due to the bounty of federal research grants that have come to Cal over the last ten years. As more and more faculty are pulled off teaching duty to pursue federal research, he notes, someone has to step in and teach the undergrads. Lecturers say statements like this just expose what everyone inside the university has known for decades: that while Cal officials publicly claim their mandate is both teaching and research, they secretly consider educating 23,000 undergraduates an irritating chore that gets in the way of their real interests.



Business School lecturer Arturo Perez-Reyes believes the UC model encourages students to stunt their education through overspecialization.

"Most California taxpayers and tuition-paying parents of UC students believe that the primary mission of these universities is to educate our undergraduates," says one lecturer who asked not to be named. "In reality, inside the university system it is understood that this is not a high priority, despite public claims to the contrary. Athletic success, prestigious and profitable research, and the development of promising graduate students all take priority. Senate faculty and

that lead to academic careers that it changes the calculus for highly educated people choosing among career paths," Schuster argues. "If you're trying to decide whether to go to grad school or law school, and you're looking at a reconfiguring of academic work and see the odds of getting a traditional career getting longer and longer, how will that affect your choice? It's not just a question of what's good for higher education, it's a question of what's good for society."

Stick around as a lecturer for more than a few years and your career may stall out.

career administrators are driven by their own career goals, and these seldom have much to do with providing the best possible education to undergraduates."

It was the great proliferation of learning under Clark Kerr that inadvertently created a glut of Ph.D.s just desperate enough to accept the indignities, long hours, and low pay of the lectureship. As the university system expands its dependency on the academy's untouchables and grows further infatuated with the notion of bringing market forces to bear on the university, Professor Schuster fears that we will undergo a sort of market correction, as the most talented minds take one look at the lowly status of academics and choose a more rewarding profession.

"We are so rapidly compressing the proportion of academic appointments

Clark Kerr's grand vision was of the "multiversity," a place where education and research coexisted, compartmentalized and parallel, separate but equal, in one elaborate campus. But perhaps we've thrown his vision out of balance. At UC Berkeley, at least, education has become the stepchild of the academy. Arturo Perez-Reyes, a lecturer at the Haas School of Business and former assistant to Vice Chancellor Mitchell, believes the Kerr model has created an atomized jumble of researchers and vocational thinkers, whose capacity to understand anything beyond the narrow confines of their specialties have been stunted. Perhaps, he says, it's time to return to a different approach — the pastoral education model of famed University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins.

"Back in the '30s, Hutchins decided that

the disrespect for teaching was exactly what was happening in academia," Perez-Reyes says. "So he hired a permanent teaching faculty with tenure at the University of Chicago. Hutchins changed all of American education and contrasted what he considered the right way to teach, to run what is called the multiversity, with the wrong way. And there was one institution right in his crosshairs: the University of California at Berkeley. An industrial, specialized place, where the study of human beings and the humanities is splintered into a thousand pieces, and you're just manufacturing sausage without any collective vision of teaching the great intellectual traditions or directly engage the students in any way. ... You grab a student at the University of Chicago and ask him about Adam Smith, and he's read *The Wealth of Nations*. You ask him about Thucydides, and he's read *The Peloponnesian Wars*. You ask him about Newton, and he's actually read *The Principia*. At Berkeley, every year I ask for a show of hands of how many people have read Shakespeare in college, and I get one or two hands. After thirteen years, I've had two students who have studied Plato in college. Here, you only get traction if you get more and more specialized. So the study of humanity splinters out, and no one can speak the same language to anyone outside their department."

Such a vision will hardly solve the state's financial problems. Indeed, the community college system, whose sole mandate is education, already relies on underpaid lecturers to pay its own bills. But in the UC system, it might lead to a more humanistic approach to marshaling its vast resources. There are still tens of thousands of undergraduates at UC campuses, blissfully unaware that the men and women who shape their education are the last ones hired and the first ones fired. Perhaps it's time they became more than an afterthought.

E-mail chris.thompson@eastbayexpress.com

FOR ALL his comparative fortune, Bourg will probably find the same problem wherever he goes. Twenty years ago, lecturers were little-noticed contract laborers who either stepped in when a course was far more popular than tenure-track faculty could handle, or were businessmen and lawyers who taught on the side and offered students a pragmatic perspective, stripped of ivory-tower idealism. Now, the lecturer has become the linchpin of American undergraduate education. According to Jonathan Knight, an associate secretary at the American Association of University Professors, part-time lecturers and adjunct professors comprised 22 percent of university faculty in 1970; today, they are 43 percent.

Meanwhile, job security is practically nonexistent. For instance, most Cal lecturers are hired on a one-year contract



Lecturers and clerical workers have threatened to paralyze the campus if their demands aren't met.

Not surprisingly, a chorus of lecturers has emerged to complain about their status at Cal. "No matter how good my teaching reviews, I will never be offered a tenure-track position (or any other position)," gripes John Latto, a lecturer in the

Most ominously, lecturers claim that the wages and working conditions have created a constant turnover in the system, which may help the university keep costs down but ensures a constant exodus of experienced hands in the classroom. Con-

The state's promise of universal higher education put lecturers in this position. As World War II ended, and thousands of Californians began swarming onto college campuses armed with the GI Bill, UC President Clark Kerr

Although many say they are satisfied

HOW COULD the state's flagship university have come to such a point without anyone noticing? The answer lies in the unique workplace culture of academia. Departmental autonomy is highly prized. Deans and academic chairs make most of the budgetary and staffing decisions, atomizing fiscal questions across the system with no sense of accountability or transparency. Depart-

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University Underclass

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oversaw the drafting of what was arguably one of the great advancements in our civic life: the California Master Plan for Higher Education.

The plan formalized the different arms of higher education; community colleges and the state university system would concentrate primarily on teaching undergraduates, while the UC system would fulfill a dual function of teaching the state's brightest students and becoming one of the world's great research institutions. New campuses sprang up throughout the '60s — Cal State Hayward's campus opened in 1963, and the Oakland campus of Laney College opened in 1970 — and college enrollment jumped from 174,000 in 1960 to 1.4 million in 1999. Most

a pittance of money while you scrounge around the job market. The supply-demand ratio makes it possible for these jobs to be miserably low-paid."

In some ways, lecturers are simply the public face of a much deeper crisis confronting California. In 1997, the Rand Corporation published a study on the fiscal problems of the state university system, and the portrait is dire. In the wake of Proposition 13, state funding for higher education gradually plateaued at the very time that macroeconomic changes made college degrees indispensable for gainful employment. Enrollment continues to soar — roughly two million Californians are expected to attend college in 2015, a sixty percent increase over 1997 — but the operating costs of educating students have far outstripped inflation and are twice what they were in 1980. The end result is

Across the UC system, lecturers often earn less money than elementary school teachers.



Lecturer Jim Stockinger kicks off a rally in support of the lecturers' strike.

importantly, thanks to a steadfast commitment to bargain-basement student fees, the plan established cheap, accessible higher education as the birthright of every Californian.

But this same birthright may lie at the heart of the problem. Because so many Californians have had access to the uppermost echelons of the academy, the state has an enormous glut of Ph.D.s eager to take any university job, driving down the wages. "There's a huge oversupply of Ph.D.s," says UC Berkeley lecturer Bob Acker. "My guess is that a department of twenty faculty will graduate five or so Ph.D.s per year, who are obviously not all going to get jobs. A lectureship is a fill-in after you get your degree, which brings in

a system faced with stagnant revenue, escalating costs, and burgeoning demand in the one sector critical to the state's economy. University administrators have sporadically tried to raise student fees to cover costs, but if they go too far, thousands of the state's poorest citizens would be locked out of the primary avenue to prosperity in modern life.

That's not to say UC couldn't pay its employees better. Peter Donahue, an economist retained by the clerical workers' union, claims that UC's discretionary revenue has steadily grown over the last ten years, and that university managers have simply used accounting tricks to hide hundreds of millions in cash. But even if he's right, there's no denying that